

HORROR



NO. 34
DEC.-JAN.

10¢



10¢

THE VAULT OF HORROR®

FEATURING...



THE VAULT-KEEPER



THE CRYPT-KEEPER



THE OLD WITCH





SO WHAT? SO YOU, TOO, CAN JOIN THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB!

FOR AN INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP, FILL OUT THE COUPON AND SEND IT IN, TOGETHER WITH 25¢. IF FIVE OR MORE OF YOU WISH TO JOIN AS AN AUTHORIZED CHAPTER, ENCLOSE EACH MEMBER'S NAME AND ADDRESS, ALONG WITH 25¢ FOR EACH NAME, AND INDICATE THE NAME OF THE ELECTED CHAPTER PRESIDENT. WE WILL NOTIFY EACH PRESIDENT OF HIS CHAPTER NUMBER. EVERY MEMBER, CHAPTER OR INDIVIDUAL, WILL RECEIVE HIS KIT DIRECTLY... BY RETURN MAIL.

THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB
ROOM 704
225 JACARANTE STREET
NEW YORK 12, N.Y.

SO, ALL RIGHT? SO HERE'S MY TWO BITS, SO MAKE ME A MEMBER, ALREADY, AND SEND ME THE THINGS AND STUFF LIKE WHAT THE KID UP THERE GOT... SO!

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ ZONE NO. _____
STATE _____

VALUE OF ISSUE: Dec., 1954-Jan., 1955, Vol. 1, No. 14 Published Bi-Monthly by E. C. Publications Co., Inc., at 125 Lafayette St., New York 12, N. Y. William M. Gaines, Managing Editor. Albert B. Feldstein, Editor. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office at New York, N. Y. Post office subscription in the U. S. 48c. plus 12c postage. Total 71c—wherever 71-cent rates obtain. Second-class postage paid at New York, N. Y. by E. C. Publications Co., Inc. Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped return envelope. No liability assumed for the characters, names or persons appearing in this magazine with the exception of those being advertised and any similarity is purely coincidental. Printed in U. S. A.

THE VAULT OF HORROR!

HEY, HEY! HELLO, THERE, YOU CRAZY MIXED-UP KID! I'M HAPPY TO SEE THAT YOU HAVE GATHERED ENOUGH COURAGE TO VENTURE ONCE AGAIN INTO THE **HAZARD!** CLEAR AWAY THAT PILE OF WITHERED, MAGGOTY BONES AND SIT DOWN! DID YOU BRING YOUR SHRUNKEN-EYE-BALL-SOOD-LICKS-CHARM? I WANT YOU TO BE WELL PREPARED FOR THE **HOWLIFTING HAIR-RAISER!** I'M ABOUT TO TELL! YOU'LL LIKE THIS ONE, I'M SURE... SO WITHOUT FURTHER ADO, LET'S BEGIN THE STORY CALLED...

STAR LIGHT, STAR BRIGHT!



DARK HAD SETTLED OVER THE DRAIN GROUNDS OF BETHWOOD, AND THE MISTY RAIN FELL WITH A DIABOLICAL PERSEVERANCE, COVERING ALL WITH A WETNESS THAT WAS MAGGOTINE. MARTLEY DUNN HUNCHED HIS SHOULDERS AGAINST THE CHILL, AND CURSED SOFTLY.



HE CURSED THE RAIN AND THE COLD. HE CURSED THE UNIFORMED GUARDS BESIDE HIM AND THE MINISTER BEFORE HIM. THE JIBBERING CROWD SURROUNDING HIM AND THE GNAWING FEAR INSIDE HIM! HE EVEN CURSED THE BODY LYING IN THE UNCOVERED COFFIN!



FROM BEHIND HIM, A FIGURE CRAWLED TO THE COFFIN AND PLAYFULLY FINGERED THE FACE OF THE CORPSE! NO ONE MADE A MOVE TO STOP HIM! HARTLEY QUIMS WAS HORRIFIED TO THE POINT OF NAUSEA.



THE FIGURE SCURRIED BACK TO THE CROWD. THE MINISTER SPOKE ON, UNINTERRUPTED, AND HARTLEY QUIMS LOWERED HIS EYES TO THE GUTTERING WAX FIDDLES...



...BIT OF A *SHOCK*, EH, GUY'NOR?

HARTLEY QUIMS TURNED TO LOOK AT THE STERN-FACED GUARD WHO HAD ADDRESSED HIM...

LORD, YES! THAT WAS HORRIBLE!

AYE! BUT IT'S IMPORTANT! Y'ELL SEE, AFTER Y'VE BEEN HERE A BIT?



ANOTHER FIGURE CRAWLED TO THE COFFIN. HE GAZED CURIOUSLY AT THE BODY, HIS EYES SAGGED. THEN, IMPULSIVELY, HE SLAPPED THE CORPSE ACROSS THE CHEEK!



GOOD HEAVENS! DID YOU SEE THAT?

AYE! WE LET THEM DO THAT! A FUNERAL IS A *THREAT* TO THESE POOR SOULS... AND IT HELPS US TO *CONTROL* THEM! WE USE IT AS A MEANS TO ENFORCE DISCIPLINE!



HARTLEY QUIMS BEGAN TO WAVER! HE SWORE AT HIMSELF FOR EVER HAVING ACCEPTED THE POSITION OF MASTER OF BETHNOR ASYLUM! IF HE HADN'T NEEDED THE MONEY...

DISCIPLINE!

AYE, GUY'NOR! IF THE INMATES DON'T *BEHAVE* THEMSELVES, WE GONN LET THEM *ATTEND* THE NEXT FUNERAL! IT'S ABOUT THE *ONLY* WAY WE CAN *CONTROL* THEM, UNDERSTAFFED AS WE ARE!



THE COFFIN HAD AT LAST BEEN COVERED, YET A FEW OF THE INMATES RAN FORWARD TO LIFT THE LID SLIGHTLY AND PEER INQUISITIVELY INSIDE! THEN THE COFFIN WAS LOWERED INTO THE GROUND...

THANK GOD!
IT'S OVER!

AH! I GUESS YOU'RE A BIT ~~HUNGRY~~ NOT HAVING A BITE TO EAT SINCE YOU ARRIVED THIS AFTER NOON! WELL, WE'LL SOON FIX THAT!



THE THOUGHT OF FOOD HAD NEVER ENTERED HARTLEY'S MIND, BUT HE WALKED WITH THE GUARDS TO THE MESS HALL, WHICH STATED BOTH INMATES AND CUSTODIANS ALIKE...

WE MUST UNDERSTAND, SIR! THE INMATES AREN'T *INSANE*! FOR THE MOST PART, THEY'RE MERE *CHILDREN*! THEY JUST ACT AND THINK LIKE *LITTLE KIDS*!

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE *MASTER* WHO PRECEDED *ME*?



OH, *WIM*, POOR SOUL! THE *MASTER* *KILLED* HIM WHEN HE TRIED TO TAKE AWAY ALL THEIR *FUNERAL PRIVILEGES*!

HARTLEY QUINN NERVOUSLY LIFTED THE FORK AND SPEARED A CHOICE PIECE OF STEAK. HE WAS ABOUT TO PLACE IT IN HIS MOUTH WHEN HIS GAZE DRIFTED OUT OVER THE TABLE. HIS HAND TREMBLED...

A HUNDRED GLARING EYES BURNED INTO HIS! A HUNDRED HATE-FILLED EYES WATCHED HIS EVERY MOVE.



SUDDENLY HE SAW THE SLOWLY FOOD THEY WERE EATING. HE GLANCED AT THE JUICY, TENDER MORREL OF STEAK ON HIS FORK AND THEN LOOKED AGAIN INTO THEIR VANDUSIOUS EYES. THE FORK CLATTERED TO THE TABLE AS HE ROSE UNSTEADILY TO HIS FEET...

I, I'M *NOT* VERY *HUNGRY*! IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME I, I THINK I'LL GO TO MY *ROOM*!

WELL, ALL RIGHT, *MY* *ROOM*! MIND IF I TAKE *YOUR* STEAK?



HARTLEY QUINN HURRIED FROM THE MESS HALL AS FAST AS HIS WOBBLING LEGS WOULD CARRY HIM, AND CLIMBED THE RICKETY STAIRS TO HIS ROOM! ONCE INSIDE, HE BOLTED THE PUMPY LOCK AND LEANED HEAVILY AGAINST THE DOOR...

THEY *HATE* ME! I COULD TELL! THEY WANT TO *KILL* ME TOO! THEY *HATE* ME!



HE THREW HIMSELF ONTO THE BED, SAZED FIRMLY THROUGH THE SKY-LIGHT AT THE SKY. THE RAIN HAD STOPPED. AND HE COOED...



SUDDENLY HE WAS SHAKENED BY THE GRASPING OF MANY HANDS! HE FELT A CLOTH BEING ROUGHLY SHOVED INTO HIS MOUTH!



HIS EYES BUGGED OPEN AND BEHOLD A SIGHT THAT FROZE HIS HEART-BEAT! A DOZEN MOURNERS SURROUNDED HIS BED, READILY TYING HIM WITH STOUT ROPES!



IN HORROR, HE FELT THEM LIFT HIM FROM THE BED AND CARRY HIM FROM THE BUILDING. QUIETLY THEY MOVED ACROSS THE COBBLESTONE COURTYARD, IN THE SHADOWS, PAST OTHER BUILDINGS...



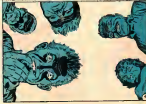
THEY REACHED THEIR DESTINATION, THE CARPENTER'S SHOP! AS HE WAS CARRIED INSIDE, HE SENSED A MULTITUDE OF PEOPLE AND HE CRANED HIS NECK THIS WAY AND THAT, THE BETTER TO SEE! IN THE DIM LIGHT, HIS EYES FELL UPON AN OPEN COFFIN!



A SOUND GURGLED IN HIS THROAT! HE TRIED TO BRY FREE... HE SCURNED AND TWISTED BUT HE WAS LIFTED AND THEN PLACED IN THE COFFIN! HIS BODY GAVE AN INVOLUNTARY SHUDDER OF REVULSION AND TEARS ROLLED FREELY FROM HIS EYES.



HE HEARD THE SHUFFLING OF MANY FEET, THE WHISPER OF CLOTH MUSTLING AGAINST CLOTH, AND THE SOFT SONGS OF SORROW. WAS THIS A GAME? WHAT WERE THEY GOING TO DO TO HIM? SUDDENLY, FROM ALL SIDES, THE MOURNERS LOOMED INTO VIEW.



IN HIS MIND'S EYE, VISIONS OF THE FUNERAL HE HAD WITNESSED ONLY A FEW HOURS BEFORE FLASHED BY! HE TREMBLED AT THE THOUGHT OF IT! THE COFFIN LID DESCENDED...



IN THE DEEPY BLACKNESS, HE CRIED OUT SILENTLY IN TERROR! WOULD THEY LET HIM SUFFOCATE? HE LISTENED... AND HEARD WHISLS OF PROTEST! WHAP! WHAP! WHAP!



HE HEARD THE INMATES CONVERSING IN LOW TONES. THEN, SUDDENLY, THE LID WAS REMOVED! WERE THEY GOING TO FREE HIM?



SURELY THEY COULD ONLY BE *PLAYING A GAME!* THERE WAS AN EXPECTANT QUIET, BROKEN ONLY BY THE SOUND OF SAWING WOOD! A FACE SUDDENLY LERRED INTO THE COFFIN AND JUST AS SUDDENLY DISAPPEARED! AND THEN THE COFFIN-LID WAS OVERHEAD! *THEY WERE PUTTING IT BACK ON!*



FACES APPEARED FROM ALL ANGLES! HAPPY FACES, SAD FACES, CURIOUS FACES, WORRIED FACES! DIFFERENT FACES, DIFFERENT EXPRESSIONS... YET EACH ONE THE SAME AS ALL THE OTHERS!



THE GIGGS AND GRINS THAT FOLLOWED WERE ALL APPRECIATIVE! AND NO WONDER! THE LID NOW HAD A *WINDROW* THROUGH WHICH HE COULD RECEIVE AIR! OR WAS IT PUT THERE SO THE INMATES COULD *SEE* HIM BETTER? HE DIDN'T KNOW!



A HAND REACHED THROUGH THE OPENING AND FELT OF HIS CHEEK! HARTLEY DUMB CLOSED HIS EYES, BUT EVEN THEN HE HEARD THE PEOPLE BRUSHING AGAINST THE OUTSIDE OF THE COFFIN, SENSED THEIR HORRID HEADS FRAMED IN THE OPENING! A HAND PINCHED HIS NOSE!



HE HAD LOST ALL TRACK OF TIME. HE LAY THERE, MOTIONLESS, WHILE THE MOUROWING INMATES SLOWLY FILED BY PAYING THEIR 'LAST RESPECTS'. EACH TIME HE OPENED HIS EYES, A DIFFERENT FACE WAS PEERING INTO HIS. HE TRIED TO PRAY BUT HE COULDN'T REMEMBER THE WORDS...



FINALLY HE FELT THE COFFIN BEING LIFTED! WOULD THEY RETURN HIM TO HIS ROOM NOW? THEY HADN'T REALLY TRIED TO *HURT* HIM... THEY WERE MERELY PLAYING! *LITTLE CHILDREN*, THAT WAS ALL...

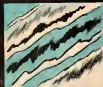
THE CEILING WAS MUCH CLOSER NOW. OBVIOUSLY, THE COFFIN WAS BEING CARRIED ON THEIR SHOULDERS! THE CEILING MOVED BY ABOVE HIM AND SOON HE WAS PASSED THROUGH THE DOORWAY INTO THE NIGHT.



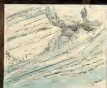
SWEEP FOR A FEW MOMENTS, THE SKY WAS CLEAR. STARS TWINKLED BRIGHTLY, UNCONCERNED WITH THE GRIEVE PAGEANT THAT WAS TAKING PLACE BELOW THEM. HE LISTENED TO THE SHUFFLING STEPS OF THE PROCESSION ON THE COBBLESTONES...



THEY WERE JUST LITTLE CHILDREN... JUST PLAYING A *GAME*! THEY WERE PROBABLY BRINGING HIM BACK TO HIS ROOM. HE SAW THE TOP OF A YARD BUILDING PASS SLOWLY BY ABOVE HIM. WASN'T THAT *HIS* BUILDING??? IT DISAPPEARED FROM VIEW.



AGAIN THERE WAS NOTHING BUT THE STAR-FILLED SKY ABOVE HIM. THAT *COULDN'T* HAVE BEEN THE BUILDING WHERE HIS ROOM WAS! HE LOOKED AGAIN AT THE SKY. CLOUDS WERE FORMING! STAR LIGHT, STAR BRIGHT... HE COULDN'T REMEMBER THE REST...



THEY PASSED BENEATH A WROUGHT-IRON ARCHWAY... A GATE! AGAINST THE DARKENING SKY, HE TRIED TO SPELL THE LETTERS HE SAW. HE HAD TO READ THEM BACKWARDS. *C...E...M...*



HE FELT HIMSELF BEING LOWERED TO THE GROUND. A MOMENT LATER HE HEARD THE UNDISSEMBLED SOUND OF SHOVELS DIGGING INTO THE RAJN-BOARDED EARTH! THE REALIZATION UNDERMINED HIS LAST VESTIGE OF SELF-CONTROL... AND HE PAINTED...



A TREE PASSED BY OVERHEAD, ITS LEAVES WHISPERING IN THE WIND, ITS BRANCHES REYING GOOD-BYE AS IT PASSED FROM HIS SIGHT! *WHERE WERE THEY TAKING HIM?* HE HAD LOST ALL SENSE OF DIRECTION. THEY WERE JUST CHILDREN... LITTLE CHILDREN... JUST LITTLE CHILDREN WHO HAD KILLED HIS PREDECESSOR...



HARTLEY GUMB'S HEART POUNDED TILL HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BURST THROUGH HIS CHEST! WERE THEY REALLY *SERIOUS*? HAD THEY FORGOTTEN HE WASN'T A *REAL* COMET? THEY WOULDN'T *BURY* HIM *ALIVE* WOULD THEY?



HARTLEY GUMB OPENED HIS EYES AND SAT UP IN BED! DROPS OF RAIN FROM A LEAK IN THE BAYLIGHT HIT HIS FACE. HE UNTANGLED HIS LEGS FROM THE MASS OF TWISTED SHEETS, PULLED THE CACKING BEDCLOTHES FROM HIS MOUTH AND HRAVED A SON...



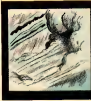
HE WIPE THE ASPIRATION FROM HIS HEAD AND SAVE PERVENT THANKS. THAT IT HAD ONLY BEEN A HORRIBLE NIGHTMARE! HE LAY BACK ON THE PILLOW... RELAXED.



HARTLEY QUIMB SMILED SOFTLY, EVERY FINGER OF HIS BEING TINGLING WITH RELIEF. HE LOOKED UP THROUGH THE SKYLIGHT AT THE WINKING STARS, AND IMAGINED THEM TO BE RELIEVED FOR HIM, TOO.



HE RECHIEVED THE POEM: STAR LIGHT, STAR BRIGHT... AND THE TIME HE *KNEW* ALL THE WORDS! HE CLOSED HIS EYES MOMENTARILY AND MADE A WISH...



...AND WHEN HE OPENED HIS EYES-AGAIN A FACE WAS DURNING DOWN AT HIM.

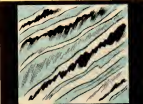


...AND THEN A SHOVELFUL OF DIRT HIT HIM PLUSH IN THE FACE...



THE
END.

STARTLED, HARTLEY QUIMB TRIED TO LEAP UP, BUT FOUNDHE COULDN'T MOVE! HE TRIED TO YELL, TO SCREAM, BUT COULDN'T! THE FACE DISAPPEARED...



TOH, TOH... AM'T THAT A DIRTY SHAME? JUST IN CASE SOME OF YOU CHARACTERS ARE A LITTLE BIT CONFUSED, HERE'S THE LOW-DOWN! HARTLEY WAS IN THE COFFIN ALL THE TIME! HE ONLY DREAMED HE WORE UP IN HIS ROOM! ACTUALLY, UNFORTUNATELY, WHEN HE *PAINTED* FOR A FEW MOMENTS.

HE SUBCONSCIOUSLY DREAMED THAT... ER... WAIT A MINUTE! WHEN HE WAS IN... NO... ER... HE DREAMED HE WAS AWAKE, WHEN... NO, THAT'S NOT - OH, THE DEVIL WITH IT!



THE CRYPT OF TERROR

WELL, WELL! SO VACATION TIME IS OVER...EH, KIDDING? WELL, LET'S REMIND YOU I'LL TELL YOU A VACATION TALK THAT WILL TICKLE YOUR GRABBY SPINE. WELCOME TO THE CRYPT OF TERROR, THIS IS YOUR HOST IN HOWLS, YOUR GRYFF-KEEPER, GUEST-SPOTTING IN VARIOUS MORBID MUCK-WAD WITH THE TELL-PARK 1 CALL...

WHILE THE CAT'S AWAY...



JOHN YOUNGER AND HIS PARTNER, FRANK WESTER, HAD BEEN WORKING THEIR LITTLE RACKET SUCCESSFULLY FOR ALMOST A YEAR. THEY'D OPENED A SMALL TRAVEL AGENCY DOWNTOWN, LINED THE WALLS WITH ATTRACTIVE POSTERS OF ROMANTIC FAR-AWAY SPOTS, AND PROCEEDED TO FLEECHE THEIR CUSTOMERS IN THE FOLLOWING FASHION. TAKE THE CASE OF MIRANDA CRUMM, A RICH OLD WIDOW. SHE'D COME TO THE *TRAVEL AGENCY* ASKED TO ARRANGE HER VACATION

ON TUES. MRS CRUMM. BEHIND IS LONELY THIS TIME OF YEAR. WE'LL BE GLAD TO MAKE ALL THE NECESSARY RESERVATIONS FOR YOU

THANK YOU, MR. YOUNGER. THAT WILL BE FOR TWO WEEKS, STARTING THE TWELFTH...



AS OPERATORS OF A TRAVEL BUREAU, IT WAS EASY FOR MR. YOUNGER AND MR. WESTON TO EXTRACT THE NECESSARY INFORMATION FROM THEIR CUSTOMERS.



NATURALLY, NONE OF THEIR CUSTOMERS EVER SUSPECTED THE REAL REASON FOR THE VERY PERSONAL QUESTIONS THEY WERE ASKED...



AFTER THEY'D LEARNED EVERYTHING ABOUT THEIR PROSPECTIVE VACATIONERS THAT THEY NEEDED, THEY WOULD PROCEED NORMALLY...



AND THE HAPPY CUSTOMER WOULD SOON BE OFF ON THE VACATION THAT THE TRAVEL AGENCY HAD FULLY PLANNED FOR HER... BUT A NIGHT OR TWO LATER...



YES, RECORDED. ARMED WITH THE FACT THAT MIRANDA CRUMM WAS SOMEWHERE ON THE HIGH SEAS, SOUNDING FOR BERMUDA... THAT IF SHE COULD AFFORD SUCH A VACATION, SHE WAS OBVIOUSLY WELL-TO-DO... AND THAT, SINCE SHE LIVED ALONE, HER HOUSE WAS NOW EMPTY, JOHN YOUNGER AND FRANK WESTON LET THEMSELVES IN.



AND, UNDISTURBED, THEY RELIEVED THEIR TRAVELING CUSTOMER'S HOUSE OF ITS VALUABLES...



OF COURSE, POOR MISS CRUMM, WHEN SHE RETURNED FROM HER SOJOURN, GLADLY LOST HER ACQUIRED BUNTAN WHEN SHE SAW THAT HER HOUSE HAD BEEN RANSACKED...



HEH, HUH? NICE LITTLE RACKET, CH. FIGURE WHAT BETTER WAY COULD THERE BE OF FINDING A PROSPECTIVE HOUSE TO ROB THAN BY LEARNING THAT THE RICH OCCUPANTS WERE GOING AWAY ON A VACATION? AND WHAT BETTER WAY OF LEARNING IT THAN BY ARRANGING THE WHOLE THING YOURSELF? SO NOW YOU KNOW FRANKIE AND JOHNNY'S LITTLE RACKET, NOW READ ON AND SEE WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM...



ONE DAY, JOHN YOUNGER GOT A STRANGE PHONE CALL...

IS THIS THE F.B.I. TRAVEL AGENCY?

THAT'S RIGHT. THIS IS MR. YOUNGER SPEAKING.



I'D LIKE YOU TO ARRANGE A TWO WEEK VACATION FOR ME, MR. YOUNGER. I'VE BEEN WORKING VERY HARD LATELY, AND...

DO YOU HAVE ANY FAR-FLUNG PLACE IN MIND, SIR?



I'M THINKING OF FLYING TO LONDON, SO YOU THINK YOU COULD GET ME PLANE RESERVATIONS... SAY... FOR THE TWENTH?

OF COURSE, SIR? IN WHOSE NAME DO I MAKE THE RESERVATIONS?

ER...MY NAME IS T. CHARLES KIRKMAN?

AND WHERE DO YOU LIVE, MR. KIRKMAN?

I LIVE AT 711 WOODS ROAD...

711...WOODS ROAD. FINE, AND NOW, IF YOU'LL ANSWER SOME QUESTIONS, MR. KIRKMAN...FOR OUR FILES.



DO YOU LIVE ALONE, MR. KIRKMAN?

THERE IS NO ONE LIVING IN MY PLACE WITH ME, MR. YOUNGER, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU MEAN...

ALL RIGHT, MR. KIRKMAN, WE'LL TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING, ER... WILL YOU PICK UP YOUR RESERVATIONS HERE?

NO, MR. YOUNGER, YOU'D BETTER HAVE THEM TO ME. JUST TELL ME HOW MUCH THEY'LL BE AND I'LL SEND YOU THE MONEY...



AFTER MR. YOUNGER HAD COMPLETED THE ARRANGEMENTS WITH MR. KINGMAN, HE HUNG UP AND TURNED TO HIS PARTNER.

"711 WOODS ROAD? THAT'S OUT IN THE SUBURBS, ISN'T IT, FRANK?"

"YEAH! *SUB* ESTATES OUT THERE! WHY?"

"WHAT LUCK? SOME OLD GUY JUST CALLED. WANTS US TO ARRANGE FOR A PLANE TRIP TO EQUADOR FOR HIM. HE MUST BE *LOADED*! AND HE SAID THERE WAS *NO ONE* LIVING WITH HIM, TOO!"

"ANOTHER TUCKER? GREAT! LET'S GET BUSY AND GET THOSE RESERVATIONS! AFTER HE'S GONE, WE'LL GO OUT TO HIS PLACE AND *CLEAN IT* OUT..."



THE TICKETS WERE OBTAINED AND MAILED OUT TO MR. KINGMAN. THEN, ON THE TWENTIETH, MR. YOUNGER CALLED THE AIRLINE.

"THIS IS THE *FOUR* FRANKEL AGENCY. WE JUST WANT TO CHECK. DID A MR. T. CHARLES KINGMAN TAKE OFF ON FLIGHT 12 TO EQUADOR?"

"JUST A MOMENT, I'LL SEE. YES! MR. KINGMAN WAS ASSURED."



HE HUNG UP, GRINNING...

"HE'S *GONE*? THE *COAST* IS *CLEAR*."

"WE'LL TAKE THE *STATION* WAGON TONIGHT, FRANK. THIS PROMISED TO BE A *SUB* HAVE."



THAT NIGHT, YOUNGER AND WESTON DROVE OUT INTO THE COUNTRY...

"*WOODS ROAD*? THIS IS IT? TURN IN..."

"SURE IS *LOVELY* OUT HERE AT NIGHT..."



THEIR STATION WAGON BOUNCED AND WEAVED DOWN A GERMAL TREE-LINED ROTTED ROAD.

"*SOME* ESTATE?"

"TAKE IT *EASY*? *SOME* OF THESE PLACES ARE A *LITTLE* RUN DOWN, BUT THE OLD FAMILY HEIR-LOOMS ARE *PRICELESS*! KEEP GOING!"



FINALLY THE ROAD ENDS, AND THE STATION WAGON'S HEADLIGHTS FELL UPON AN OLD, TIME-WORN, PAINT-PEELED ROTTED BARN...

"THE *GUY* *OWNED* US, WHO WOULD LIVE IN THAT *ROT-TRAP*?"

"LET'S TAKE A *LOOK*... JUST TO MAKE *SURE*?"



THEY STEPPED FROM THEIR BUSTON-
BAGGON AND CROSSED THE WILDLY
OVERGROWN LAWN. FRANK'S FLASH-
LIGHT BEAM SPUN THE FADED SIGN.

WHAT'S IT
SAID?

'BEWARE!
TRESPASSER'S
WILL BE PERSECUTED'
NAN? THAT'S A
LAUGH!



THEY CLIMBED THE ROTTED STAIRS
THAT CREAKED UNDER THEIR WEIGHT
AND STOOD UPON THE COLUMNED
PORCH BEFORE THE MASSIVE DECAYED
DOOR.

HEY, FRANK! THIS
PLACE OWES ME THE
GUESS! THERE'S NO
ONE LIVING HERE!
O'HON! LET'S
GO...

HOLD IT!
THE DOOR'S
UNLOCKED.



THE OLD DOOR SQUEALED OPEN ON
RUSTED HINGES.

NOT A STICK OF
FURNITURE!
NO THINGS! NOTHING
BUT A WILD
GOOSE CHASE!

OH! OH!



THE TWO MEN WENT FROM ROOM TO ROOM THROUGH
THE ONCE PROUD MANSION, NOW BAST LAGEN AND CON-
WESSED WITH TIME...

DESERTED! NO ONE'S
LIVED HERE FOR
YEARS...

THIS DOOR LEADS TO THE
CELLAR. WE'LL TAKE A
LOOK, AND THEN LEAVE...



THEY DESCENDED THE WINDING STONE STEPS INTO THE
DAMP CELLAR.

FRANK! WHAT'S
THAT?

A METAL DOOR!
PROLOOKEED! AND
THERE'S A SIGN
ON IT...



THEY READ THE FRESHLY PAINTED SIGN.

WE...HE
DOES
LIVE
HERE!
LOOK!

SOME AWAY ON VACATION.
WILL BE BACK IN TWO WEEKS.

**WARNING
KEEP OUT**

TCK

TCK!
T.
CHARLES
KINGMAN!



THE TWO MEN LOOKED AT EACH OTHER...

HE MUST BE ONE OF THOSE
HIGH OLD EGGENTINES. I'LL
BET HE'S GOT A FORTUNE
HIDDEN IN THERE...

STAND BACK!
I'M GOING TO
BASH THE
LOCK...



THE DARK OLD CELLAR REVERBERATED WITH THE SOUND OF THE PADLOCK SPLITTING OPEN UNDER YOUNGER'S ANGRY ASSAULT. THE HUGE METAL DOOR SWUNG WIDE.



LOOK!

SOME SORT OF LIBRARY -
WITH OLD BOOKS AND
ODDITIES.

THE TWO MEN MOVED THROUGH THE LIBRARY INTO THE CAVERN-LIKE PASSAGE BEYOND.



IT'S LIKE AN OLD
BATACOMB...

WHAT'S THAT
FLAPPING SOUND?
HEY! THERE'RE
BATS IN THERE!

TUNNELS BRANCHED OFF IN ALL DIRECTIONS. THE TWO MEN WANDERED DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO THE CARCERISED MAZE.



EACH ONE OF THESE
TUNNELS ENDS IN A
DOOR...

LOOK!
THE DOOR'S
OPENING!

AS THE DOOR AT THE END OF ONE OF THE TUNNELS SWUNG OPEN, YOUNGER AND WESTON SCREAMED...



ZOMBIES!

YAAAAAAHHHH!

THEY RAN WILDLY BACK THROUGH THE NETWORK OF TUNNELS...



WHICH WAY?

THIS WAY! NOT
THIS WAY! GULCH!
WE'RE LOST!

EVERY TIME THEY CAME TO A DEAD-END, A DOOR SWUNG WIDE...



VAMPIRES!

CHOKED...

HOURS PASSED AND YOUNGER AND WESTON REALIZED THAT THEY WERE HOPELESSLY LOST IN THE MAZE OF UNDERGROUND PASSAGEWAYS, HOUNDED BY THE THINGS THAT SPURGE FROM EACH TUNNEL—END DOOR AS THEY CAME UPON IT.



DAYS PASSED. THE TWO MEN COVERED IN THE DARKNESS, TOO FRIGHTENED TO MOVE, WATCHING THE CREATURES PASS BEARBY, SEARCHING FOR THEM.



IT WAS ALMOST TWO WEEKS LATER. TWO WEEKS OF DEEPER HORROR, TRAPPED IN THE NETWORK OF TUNNELS, STAYING ALIVE BY CATCHING BATS AND EATING THEM RAW. THAT JOHN YOUNGER AND FRANK WESTON CRAWLED INTO THE BOOK-LINED LIBRARY ONCE MORE.



UP THE DAMP, STONE CELLAR STEPS.



AND OUT INTO THE COOL NIGHT AIR... OUT ONTO THE PORCH.



OUT INTO THE MOONLIGHT THAT GLISTENED ON THEIR FRIGHT-WHITERED HAIR, AND AS THEY CRAWLED PAST THE OLD MAN WITH THE WALRUS IN HIS HAND, WHO'D JUST RETURNED FROM HIS VACATION.



THEY NEVER EVEN LOOKED UP AT ME? NO, THERE THEY GO, AFTER SPENDING TWO WEEKS IN THE DRYPT OF TERROR? YEP? THAT WAS ME, THE DRYPT-KEEPER. I O.K., USING AN ALIAS OF COURSE, WHO CALLED THE F.B.I. TRAVEL BUREAU? S'WATTER? I CAN'T GO ON A VACATION, TOO? BUT, WHY FOWADDER, YOU ASK? WELL, I WENT DOWN TO VISIT THE JUVAD FRIST, TO BRUSH UP ON THE LATEST METHODS OF SHORR-ING HUMAN HEADS. I DRYPT-ON SOME TIME. I'LL GIVE YOU A SMALL IDEA OF WHAT I'VE LEARNED. NOW, I'LL TURN YOU BACK TO V K BYE.



**WE AT E.C. ARE PROUDEST
OF OUR SCIENCE - FICTION
MAGAZINES! LOOK FOR...**



**LOOK FOR
THESE SEALS
WHEN YOU BUY!**



**THEY ARE YOUR ASSURANCE OF TOP
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**TALES FROM THE CRYPT
HAUNT OF FEAR - VAULT OF HORROR
SHOCK SUSPENSORIES
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TWO-FISTED TALES - FRONTLINE COMBAT
MAD
WEIRD SCIENCE - WEIRD FANTASY
AND THE 25¢ ANNUAL ANTHOLOGIES:
WEIRD SCIENCE-FANTASY
TWO-FISTED ANNUAL - TALES OF TERROR**

SUDDEN DEATH!



He slipped the gun into his pocket; the metal felt hot against his thigh. Then Curt Benbow peered at the body sprawled at his feet. The cellar was almost pitch-dark; he could barely make out the outflung arms and the gaping chest wound darkening the shirt of the man he had just killed.

Benbow walked quickly across the uneven cement floor, to the axe he had hidden. He picked it up, hefted it for a moment, then strode back to the spot where the body lay. Glancing up, he located the cross-beams stretching darkly across the ceiling. An old-fashioned cellar like this was perfect for Benbow's scheme. He'd hack through those ancient beams until the ceiling started to sag, then make his getaway. In minutes the supports would crack... the ceiling would come crashing down upon the dead man, making it appear that the victim had been killed by the sudden collapse of the supporting beams.

With a crunching sound, the axe bit into the dry wood. Again and again the metal flashed. Benbow could see the rafters beginning to crack, the heavy plaster sagging perceptibly. Perspiring from exertion, Benbow stopped to catch his breath. A few more swings of the axe would do it. Spitting on his palms, to ease the sting of the blisters on his skin, Benbow started swinging again.

The cross-beam suddenly broke, with no warning. And before he could

dodge out of the way, Benbow felt himself being buried under the cascading weight. He went down, managed somehow to turn over on his back . . . then the great blackened beams came crashing over him.

When he came to, his face was covered with plaster-dust. He blinked and tried to move. With a gasp of horror, Benbow realized he had no feeling in his arms or legs. Several huge chunks of wood rested across his body, almost completely covering him. He moaned . . . the sudden collapse of the ceiling had pinned him here to the murky cellar floor, as incapable of motion as a paralyzed insect on a biologist's slide!

Benbow caught his breath. In the dark he saw eyes glittering at him. Ten eyes . . . maybe a dozen. And they were coming closer, scuttling across the floor. With a spasm of terror, Benbow realized the place was full of rats!

Now they were running over his immobilized feet, held there so motionless by the ponderous weight of the fallen beams. With a scream of agony that reverberated grotesquely through the old basement, Benbow felt a shattering explosion of pain . . . heard the ghoulish gnashing of teeth tearing at his exposed flesh. He tried to thrash about, to free himself from this hideous torture . . . but Benbow knew he was trapped. The rats were already chewing ravenously at his ankles, chomping at his meat and tearing it loose in great raw strips.

Benbow prayed for sudden death, hoping that his heart would stop beating before the savage rats completed their grisly task. Before they had completely ripped Benbow's feet from his body with their hideous razor-sharp fangs!



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THE VAULT-KEEPER'S CORNER

JOIN THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB! There - I said it O.K! Now stop twisting my arm and leave me with my column!

Concubines, ghosts! Here, to storm the lowest ceiling, are the lowest publications in our **HORROR HIT PARADE**

BLACK UP YOUR BROTHERS IN YOUR OLD
KIT BAG
COME JOSEPHINE, TRY MY NEW GUILLOTINE
SQUIMM' THROUGH THE TERNEN
DON'T MAIM ME
I'M GONNA WASH THAT BLOOD RIGHT OUTTA
MY LAIR
THEY'VE GOT AN AWFUL LOT OF COFFINS
IN BRAZIL
BUTCHER ME
COMIN' THROUGH THE LYE
THE SCAR-MANGLED ANNA
I LOATHED YOU AS I NEVER LOATHED BEFORE
WILD HEARES
SEVEN LONELY GRAVES

The above terrorisms taken were submitted by Eddie Turner of Baldwin City, Kansas; Joe Mulkey II of Detroit, Mich.; Michael Page of Springdale, Maine, and Bonnie Bourgeois and Albery Carey of New Orleans, La.

Anthony Pevens of Monterey, Calif. suggests the following **VAMPIRE VOCALISTS**

BURY COMO
THE CHILLS MOOS
FRANKIE FAIN
BONEY BENNETT
NAT' KING CINQUEL
VIC THE MOAN



Our **FUTURO PROVERBS** department inspired the following one-track-mind gems

A ROLLING HEAD GATHERS NO MOTHS

Milo Thompson
Great Falls, Mont.

A ROLLING GHOUL GATHERS NO VAMPIRES

Tim Smith
Houston, Texas

A WALKING CORPSE GATHERS NO MAGGOTS

Michael Reynolds
Somerset, Pa.

And now for some poems by **Y-Y-Y-E-E-O-O**
U-U-W! THE THIRD ANNUAL TALES OF TERROR
E.C. A HORROR ANTHOLOGY . 122 PAGES OF
CHILLS REPRINTS FROM 1922 . STILL AVAIL-
ABLE IS: YOUR NAME YOUR ADDRESS NOW
LEGGO, AWEADY!

So, as I was saying, some **PERVERTED POETRY**

I Want a Ghoul
Just Like the Ghoul
That Batted Dear Old Dad
She Was a Fiend
And the Only Ghoul



That Deadly Sweet Head
A Real Old-fashioned Ghoul
With Long Sharp Claws,
Had a Scaly
But She Was After Pow's
I Want a Ghoul
Just Like the Ghoul
That Batted Dear Old Dad

Nelson Brydwell
Oklahoma City, Okla.

We've had friends
Who are no more...
They lie beneath
Our yellow floor
We keep our friends
As you can see
We share their bones
With company
We dig them up
And on a stick
Share the best friends
We ever had



Bonnie Lee Warner
Brooklyn, N. Y.

One bright day in the middle of the night
Two dead boys got up to fight
Back to back, they faced each other
Pulled out knives and shot each other
A ghastly poison on each of the bones
And came and killed these two dead boys!

Michael Griggs
St. John, N. Y.

A little boy that was so cruel
Dads I know his father was a ghoul
His mother, a vampire
His sisters, zombies
His brother, a werewolf, who ate raw humans

Tony Cohen
Pawson, N. J.

Oh give me a grave
Where the ghosts, they all were
Where the ghouls and the werewolves all play
Where there's a horrible rest
And a discouraging sleep
And the shreds are happy all day

Larry and Betty John
Washington, D. C.

And now, in closing g-g-h-o-u-l-l-a-a-a-oh! **JOIN THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB!** (Not that one, stupid--ad!) **THE THIRD ANNUAL TALES OF TERROR** (Not that one, stupid--ad!) **SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE** (Not one, stupid--ad!) **SO RELEASE YOUR HOLD FROM MY JUGULAR VEIN AND I'LL TELL THEM TO THIS OR ANY OTHER E.C. MAG** No FOR SIX ISSUES THE ADDRESS FOR BUREAU OF TALES OF TERROR ORDERING AS WELL AS FAN MAIL, IS

The Vault-Keeper
Room 706, Dept. 34
223 Lafayette Street
N. Y. C. 12, N. Y.

(TO JOIN THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB* SEE THE INSIDE FRONT COVER)

HERE'S A WARMING LITTLE
TERROR-TALE. I CALL IT...

SMOKE WRINGS



HUBERT TILLINGS, A SMALL, MIDDLE-AGED BESPECTACLED MAN, BUSHTY BALDING, HAD WAITED UNEASILY IN THE RECEPTION ROOM OF THE B-V-G-S-O. ADVERTISING AGENCY, CRADLING HIS SHAGGY BRIEFCASE ON HIS LAP. FOR THREE LONG HOURS HE'D LOOKED UP EACH TIME THE RECEPTIONIST'S SWITCHBOARD HAD BUZZED, ONLY TO SEE HER SMILE AND SHAKE HER HEAD. FINALLY, TOWARD CLOSING TIME, WHEN HUBERT HAD JUST ABOUT GIVEN UP ALL HOPE OF SEEING ANYONE ABOUT HIS WONDERFUL IDEA, THE RECEPTIONIST NODDED TO HIM...

MR. TILLINGS! MISS JACKSON
WILL SEE YOU NOW.

MISS JACKSON? WHY... WHY...
OH, DEAR! A MOMENT!



HUBERT TILLINGS WAS THE SHY, RETICENT, SELF-CONSCIOUS TYPE. HIS SLIGHT BUILD AND RELATIVELY UNATTRACTIVE FEATURES, TOGETHER WITH THIS SHYNESS, HAD FORCED HIM TO GO THROUGH LIFE WITHOUT EVER KNOWING A WOMAN. WOMEN FRIGHTENED HIM.

MR. TILLINGS MOVED SLOWLY DOWN THE HALL TO THE THIRD DOOR ON THE LEFT. GRIPPING HIS BRIEFCASE UNTIL THE KNUCKLES ON HIS HANDS TURNED WHITE, HE RAFFED SOFTLY AND ENTERED.

MISS JACKSON IS THE PERSON
TO SEE, MR. TILLINGS. SHE'S IN
CHARGE OF THE LLAMA CIGARETTE
ACCOUNT. GO RIGHT IN. THIRD
DOOR ON YOUR LEFT.

TH-THANK
YOU, MISS!



MR. TILLINGS?

Y-YES!



LORNA JACKSON WAS THE TYPICAL CAREER WOMAN TYPE... SMARTLY DRESSED... COULD BE ATTRACTIVE... BRISK AND BUSINESSLIKE... SHE STOOD BEHIND A METICULOUSLY NEAT DESK... MOTIONED MR. TILLINGS TO A CHAIR BESIDE IT...



MR. TILLINGS OPENED HIS BRIEFCASE AND SPREAD OUT A SHEAF OF SKETCHES ON MISS JACKSON'S DESK.



MISS JACKSON CAME AROUND FROM BEHIND HER DESK. SHE SMILED WARMLY, BENDING OVER REFULLED MR. TILLINGS SO THAT HER HEAVY PERFUME BLANKETED HIM.



LORNA STUDIED MR. TILLINGS AS HE STAMMERED THROUGH THE SPEECH HE'D CAREFULLY REHEARSED. LORNA DISMISSED MEN. THEY HAD ALL THE OPPORTUNITIES... ALL THE HIGH POSITIONS... MEN STOOD IN HER WAY...



HUBERT POINTED TO HIS CRUDE DRAWINGS...



IT JUST LOOKS COMPLICATED, MISS JACKSON. REALLY, IT IS QUOTE SIMPLE. I'VE ALREADY BUILT A SMALL-SCALE WORKING MODEL, AND



SHE RAN HER HAND SLOWLY OVER HIS BALDING HEAD, CATCHING HIS SPRY HAIR BETWEEN HER FINGERS. HER SPEECH WAS NOW ON HIS FLUSHED CHEEK.



LORNA AND HUBERT HAD DINNER IN A ROMANTIC LITTLE RESTAURANT JUST DOWN THE BLOCK FROM THE BYE-BYE OFFICES. ALL DURING THE MEAL, SHE CHATTED WITH HIM GAILY, SUGGESTIVELY, ASKING HIM QUESTIONS ABOUT HIS LIFE, SO OBVIOUSLY INTERESTED IN HIM...

LORNA'S HAND STOLE ACROSS THE TABLE... REACHING FOR HUBERT'S... CARRESSING IT...



HUBERT HESITATED. HE FELT HIS HEART BEAT FASTER. HIS BLOOD RUSH TO HIS CHEEKS. WAS HE DREAMING? WAS ALL THIS *REAL*? HET HUBERT TILLINGS? HE SLIPPED PAST LAURA INTO HER LUXURIOUSLY FURNISHED APARTMENT...



LORNA KNELT ON THE HUGE SECTIONAL BESIDE HUBERT... PASSING HER LIPS... WHISPERING...



IN THE WEEKS THAT FOLLOWED, LORNA SAW A GREAT DEAL OF HUBERT. SHE ALSO SAW A GREAT DEAL OF THE BIG WHEELS IN THE AGENCY...



THIS IS A **FABULOUS** **SOMEONE** MISS JACKSON. **FABULOUS**. THE WAGE & RAISE AND A **PROMOTION** FOR YOU. PLUS A **NICE BONUS**.

THANKS, H.B.!

ON HER DATES WITH HUBERT, LORNA KEPT REPORTING ON WHAT WAS HAPPENING WITH HIS IDEA...



NOTHING FET, TILLY. BUT I'M **WORKING** ON IT!

THAT'S **SWEET** OF YOU, LORNA!

DURING THE DAY, LORNA WOULD VISIT THE CONSTRUCTION SITE...



THE **SIGN** WILL **COVER** THE **FACE** OF THAT BUILDING, REACHING **FOUR STORIES** HIGH. THE **STEAM MECHANISM** WILL BE HOUSED IN TWO FLOORS OF REINFORCED OFFICES **BEHIND** THE **SIGN**...

VERY GOOD, H.O.

AND AT NIGHT, THE **DESTRUCTION** SITE.



LORNA, THEY'RE BUILDING A **BIG SIGN** OVER ON TIMES SQUARE. THAT ISN'T OUR **'SMOKE-RING SIGN'** IS IT?

I WANTED TO **SURPRISE** YOU NOW YOU'VE **SPOILED** IT.



YOU **SOLD** THEM ON THE **IDEA**?

OH—HUR!



NOW—HOW MUCH DO WE **GET** FOR IT, LORNA?

NOTHING, FET, DEAR. THEY WANT TO **WAIT** UNTIL IT'S **READY** TO **OPERATE**.

THEN, ONE DAY, HUBERT WROTE UP TO READ IN HIS MORNING PAPER



"ALL LAMA CIGARETTES TO UNVEIL **ROSE NEW ADVERTISING INNOVATION** ON TIMES SQUARE TONIGHT AT 10 PM." WHY IT'S **FURNISHED** MY **'SMOKE-RING SIGN'**

HASTILY HE **PHONED** LORNA...



I MEANT TO **TELL** YOU **LAST** NIGHT, DEAR, BUT IT **SLIP**PED MY MIND. MEET ME TONIGHT AT **NINE** **BENEATH** THE **SIGN**. I HAVE **GOOD NEWS**...

RIGHT, LORNA

THAT NIGHT, AT NINE SHARP, HUBERT WAITED BELOW THE **DRAPE** SIGN THAT LOOKED FOUR STORIES HIGH OVER TIMES SQUARE...



LORNA CAME AT ALMOST NINE-THIRTY. SHE TOOK HIS HAND AND LED HIM INTO THE DESERTED OFFICE BUILDING...



I'M SORRY I'M LATE, TILLY. THE AGENCY'S IN AN UPROAR OVER THE OPENING. COME ON, I WANT TO SHOW YOU HOW WE WORKED OUT THE SIGN...

LORNA, WHAT ABOUT THE MONEY?

THEY WENT UP THE BACK STAIRS...

I'LL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT, TILLY. FIRST, I WANT TO SHOW YOU THE STEAM MANUFACTURING UNIT.

I'M NOT INTERESTED IN THAT, LORNA. I WANT TO KNOW...



LORNA UNLOCKED THE FIREPROOF DOOR TO THE BOILER-FLOORED OFFICE BEHIND THE SIGN...



SEE, TILLY? JUST AS YOU DESIGNED IT. THERE'S THE STEAM CHAMBER DOWN THERE. THE WATER'S BOILING IN IT NOW... ALL READY FOR THE UNVEILING!

WHAT ABOUT THE MONEY? LORNA? HOW MUCH ARE THEY AMONG ME...

LORNA PRESSED A SWITCH. THE HUGE STEEL LID OF THE STEAM-KETTLE-LIKE CHAMBER SWUNG OPEN BELOW THEM



THE MONEY, TILLY? WHY YOU'RE NOT GETTING ANY? THE WHEELS AT THE AGENCY THINK THIS IS MY IDEA... AND I'VE BEEN WELL TAKEN CARE OF ALREADY!

WHAT? BUT YOU SAID-

LORNA MOVED TOWARD HUBERT, HER EYES BLAZING.



WHY DO YOU THINK I SAVED YOU EVERY NIGHT, YOU SUCKER? TO KEEP YOU FROM NOSEING AROUND DOWN AT THE AGENCY, SHOOTING OFF YOUR MOUTH...

LORNA...!



THIS IS MY SHOW, LITTLE MAN, AND I'M NOT GOING TO SHARE IT WITH ANYONE. TOMORROW, AFTER THE UNVEILING, THEY'RE GOING TO FIND YOUR WELL-GOOKED BODY DOWN THERE.

NO, LORNA? NO!

LORNA PUSHED, HUBERT TILLY FLAILED, THEN PLUMBED DOWNWARD, INTO THE OPEN STEAM CHAMBER FILLED WITH BUBBLING, SCALDING WATER.



LORNA STARED DOWN AT THE SINGING, STEAMING, LIQUID-FILLED TANK...

AND THEY'LL WONDER HOW YOU GOT INTO THE TANK. THEY'LL THINK YOU WERE A PORNICITY MAD BAKING...WHO COMMITTED SUICIDE...

LORNA PRESSED THE SWITCH. THE LID SWUNG SHUT.

THEY'RE WAITING FOR ME. TILLY! THIS IS MY SHOW!

SHE SLIPPED OUT OF THE OFFICE AND DOWN THE BACK STAIRS INTO THE JAM-PACKED SQAURE...

AND HERE SHE COMES, FOLKS...THE GAL RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS WONDERFUL DISPLAY. LORNA JACKSON...

LORNA STOOD ALONE UPON THE SPEAKER'S PLATFORM, ACKNOWLEDGING THE CROWD'S WILD CHEERING. THE GRAPES COVERING THE SIGN FELL AWAY, REVEALING A MAN'S HEAD...LIPS PURSED...IN ONE HAND, A PACK OF SP. LLAMAS...IN THE OTHER, A LIT CIGARETTE JUST COMING OUT OF HIS MOUTH...



LORNA PRESSED THE REMOTE CONTROL SWITCH THAT ACTIVATED THE STEAM MECHANISM...THE PRESSURE BUILT UP...THE VENT OPENED...AND...



ONE AFTER ANOTHER, LIVE-STEAM SMOKE-RINGS POPPED FROM THE PURSED LIPS OF THE MAN PAINTED ON THE HUGE SIGN. AND THEN, STRANGELY, THE SMOKE-RINGS SHOOTING OUT OVER THE CROWD SPIRALED DOWNWARD, BAKING LORNA WITH THEIR SEARING HEAT...BLISTERING...BURNING...STEWING HER ALIVE.



HEH, HEH! THAT'S A HOT ONE, EH, KIDDIEST! JUST SHOWS TO GO YOU... A GOLD POTATO USUALLY ENDS UP BAKED, BY THE TIME THEY SHUT OFF THE CRAZY BILLBOARD AND GOT TO LORNA, FOURTEEN LIVE-STEAM SMOKE-RINGS HAD CRASHED DOWN OVER HER, LIKE A CHILD'S FING-TOES, COOKING HER TO A LOBSTER RED BLOB OF BLISTERED FLESH. MWAHA... WHICH REMINDS ME, I'M HUNGRY!



THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

WEE, WEE! AND NOW THAT THE GREEK FROM THE CRYPT AND THE VACUUM FROM THE FLOOD HAVE ENTER-TAINED YOU, IT'S TIME FOR ME TO WIND UP P.E.'S FIVE-PERIODICAL WITH ANOTHER DELICIOUS DISH OF DELICIOUS DOGGED UP IN MY STUPID CAULDRON, BASED ON A FAVORITE RECKING RECIPE OF MINE. YES, HORROR-HUMBERT HOBBS, IT'S YOUR HOSTESS OF THE HAUNT OF FEAR, THE OLD WITCH, READY TO FEED YOU THE POOR PARE I CALL...

WHERE THERE'S A WILL...

DOCTOR JAMES CROTTY AND LAWYER HILLARD WALKER STOOD IN THE MARBLE PORCH OF THE FARMER MANSION AND SURVEYED THE CROWDED LIVING ROOM...

LOOK AT 'EM, DOG! LIKE PICTURES... AND THEY WAITING AROUND FOR OLD MAN FARMER TO DIE... WAITING TO SNOOP DOWN AND PICK UP THE OLD BOY'S FORTUNE AS SOON AS HE GARPS HIS LAST BREATH.

...AND THEY DON'T HAVE LONG TO WAIT EITHER, WALKER. HE'S ABOUT DONE. HIS HEART IS READY TO GIVE OUT ANY MINUTE.



DOCTOR CROTTY AND LAWYER WALKER TURNED FROM THE LIVING ROOM PACKED WITH RICH OLD HEROLD FARMER'S RELATIVES, AND CLIMBED THE LONG WINDING CARPETED STAIRCASE...

IN FACT, WALKER, ONE GOOD SHOCK WILL DO IT. ONE GOOD EMOTIONAL UPHEAVAL WILL MEAN THE OLD MAN'S DEATH.

WE'VE GOT TO TAKE THE CHANCE, DOG. I'LL DO THE TALK-ING. I'LL TRY TO TELL HIM AS GENTLY AS POSSIBLE...



THE DOCTOR AND THE LAWYER
PAUSED BEFORE THE AILING MIL-
LIGNAIRE'S BEDROOM DOOR...

I DON'T THINK
WE OUGHT TO GO
FARROWING WITH
IT, WALKER! I'M
AFRAID HIS
HEART WON'T
STAND THE
NEWS, NO
LESS THE

WE'VE GOT TO,
DOC. IT'S THE
ONLY THING WE
CAN DO! OTHER-
WISE THEY'LL
GET IT ALL...
HIS WHOLE
FORTUNE!



HAROLD PARKER, ONE OF THE RICH-
EST MEN IN THE COUNTRY, SAT DOZ-
ING IN HIS LUXURIOUS BED. HE
STIRRED, PAINFULLY, AS THE DOOR
TO HIS BEDROOM OPENED SILENTLY...



HAROLD?
YOU
AWAKE?

NO?
HARDLY!
OH! IT'S POOL
MILLARD
JAMES. COME
IN!

DOCTOR CROTTY AND LAWYER WALKER
CROSSED THE LUSHLY CARPETED
BEDROOM TO THE OLD MAN'S SIDE...

SEEMS LIKE EVERY-
BODY'S COME TO SEE
THE OLD MAN WORSE.
PASS OUT OF THE
PICTURE, EH,
MILLARD JAMES?

YES, HAROLD.
YOUR WHOLE
FAMILY'S
DOWN THERE.
WAITING?



OLD MAN PARKER SMILED WARMLY...

SURE IS AWE OF 'EM, SURE IS
NICE T'KNOW SOMEBODY CARES.
DOES A BODY GOOD T'KNOW
HE'S LOVED.

HAROLD, YOU CAN'T
GO ON BELIEVING
THAT! IT ISN'T RIGHT!
IT ISN'T TRUE!



THE SMILE ON HAROLD PARKER'S FACE FADED. HE
STARED AT HIS TRUSTED LAWYER...

WHAT ISN'T TRUE,
WALKER? WHAT ARE
YOU SAYING?

THOSE PEOPLE DOWN
THERE. THEY'RE NOT HERE
BECAUSE THEY CARE ABOUT
YOU. BECAUSE THEY LOVE YOU.



DOCTOR CROTTY PUT HIS HAND ON LAWYER WALKER'S
ARM...

PLEASE, MILLARD. IT'S TOO
LATE TO TELL HAROLD THESE
THINGS! HE HADN'T GOT VERY
LONG! LET HIM DIE IN
PEACE!

WHAT THINGS?
WHAT ARE YOU
TELLING ME,
WALKER? SPEAK
UP! WHAT'S THIS
ALL ABOUT?



MR. PARKER'S LIFE-LONG FRIEND AND LEGAL ADVISOR
SHRUGGED...

I JUST CAN'T SEE YOU MAKING A
FOOL OF YOURSELF, HAROLD. I JUST
CAN'T SEE YOU PASSING AWAY, LEAV-
ING YOUR MONEY TO THOSE...THOSE
LEECHES...AND BELIEVING THEY
LOVED YOU...

PLEASE, SHUT
MILLARD UP!
GENTLY!
GO ON,
WALKER!



MILLARD WALKER'S VOICE WAS GENTLE... SOOTHING... THE VOICE OF A MAN CONCERNED ABOUT HIS DYING FRIEND AND CLIENT.

YOU'VE WORKED HARD ALL YOUR LIFE, HAROLD, AMASSING YOUR FORTUNE. I CAN'T SEE YOU TURNING IT OVER TO THAT HOARD OF DESPISING RELATIVES. THEY'RE JUST WANTING AROUND FOR YOU TO DIE SO THEY CAN GET THEIR HANDS ON IT.

THAT ISN'T TRUE, THEY'VE COME BECAUSE

THEY'VE COME BECAUSE THE MOMENT THEY'VE DREAMED OF IS CLOSE AT HAND. THEY'VE COME BECAUSE THEY SMELL THOSE HUNDRED DOLLAR BILLS THEY'VE WAITED FOR THE MOMENT FOR YEARS... PRAYED FOR IT.

I WON'T BELIEVE IT, THEY'RE CONCERNED ABOUT ME.



THEY'RE CONCERNED ABOUT YOUR MONEY? THAT'S ALL I'VE ASKED, HAROLD. I DON'T CARE. IT'S YOUR MONEY IF YOU WANT TO LEAVE IT TO THOSE THOSE VULGAR FOLKS. SO IT. I'VE SAID MY PIECE.

SUPPOSE... NOW I'M NOT SAYING I BELIEVE YOU, BUT JUST SUPPOSE WHAT YOU SAY IS TRUE. WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE ME DO WITH THE MONEY?

BETTER TO TURN IT OVER TO A WORTHWHILE CHARITY, HAROLD... TO PEOPLE WHO NEED THE MONEY, AND WILL APPRECIATE IT... THEN TO TURN IT OVER TO THOSE WORTHLESS SWINDLERS.

IF... IF I COULD ONLY BE SURE! IF I COULD ONLY KNOW FOR CERTAIN THAT WHAT YOU'RE TELLING ME IS THE TRUTH!



IF... IF I COULD PROVE IT TO YOU, HAROLD. IF I COULD SHOW YOU, WOULD YOU CUT THEM OFF... GIVE A NEW WILL LEAVING THE MONEY TO CHARITY?

YES? YES? I WOULD! BUT HOW COULD YOU?

HAROLD, HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO HEAR THEM, ALL OF THEM, LASHING OVER YOUR DEAD BODY... SPEWING FORTH THEIR TRUE FEELINGS... OVER YOUR CORPSE...

MY... MY CORPSE?

YES, HAROLD. HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO LISTEN IN ON YOUR OWN FUNERAL? WOULD THAT CONVINCE YOU?

MY GOD, WALKER! WHAT AN IDEA! YOU MEAN STAGE A PUBLIC FUNERAL?



CORRECT. LET ME SO DOWN AND TELL THEM YOU'RE DEAD. THEN, DOCTOR CROTTY AND I WILL ARRANGE FOR A **HEAVY FUNERAL**. ONLY YOU'LL BE ALIVE IN THE CASKET, LISTENING TO EVERY WORD...

BUT, WHAT IF I SMILE... OR SNEEZE?

WE'LL ARRANGE A **CLOSED CASKET** CEREMONY.

THEN HOW WILL I HEAR?

WE'LL HAVE THE FUNERAL CHAPEL **WIRED**... HAVE A **SMALL SPEAKER** IN YOUR CASKET WITH YOU. YOU'LL HEAR **EVERY WORD** THAT'S SAID...

I AGREE! I AGREE! I AGREE...

AND I'LL DRAW UP A NEW WILL, SO THAT IF AND WHEN YOU ARE CONVINCED, YOU CAN LEAP FROM YOUR CASKET, SURPRISE THEM ALL, AND SIGN IT RIGHT IN FRONT OF THEM!

GOOD? GOOD?

THEN EVERYTHING IS SET, OH YES... WHAT **CHARITY** SHALL I MAKE THE WILL OUT FOR, HAROLD?

I'LL LEAVE THAT TO YOU, WILLARD. PICK OUT **ANY** WORTHWHILE CHARITY! BY GOD, I CAN'T WAIT...

HAROLD FARBER RUBBED HIS FINGERS TOGETHER AS HIS DOCTOR AND LAWYER LEFT...

I CAN'T WAIT TO HEAR WHAT THEY SAY! IMAGINE...

IMAGINE HAVING THE **OPPORTUNITY** TO LISTEN IN ON YOUR OWN FUNERAL... TO HEAR WHAT PEOPLE **WHISPER** ABOUT YOU... TO KNOW THE **TRUTH**. THE TRUTH THEY'VE **HIDDEN** FROM YOU EVERY MINUTE YOU WERE ALIVE!

WHILE DOWN BELOW, THE LAWYER SYCOED BEFORE THE CROWD OF HURRIED RELATIVES AND ANNOUNCED...

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN... OUR BELOVED HAROLD FARBER PASSED AWAY A FEW MOMENTS AGO!



THE NEXT MORNING, THE FUNERAL CHAPEL WAS JAMMED WITH PEOPLE...RELATIVES AND FRIENDS THAT HAD COME TO MOURN HAROLD PARKER'S PASSING. IN AN ANTEROOM, FROM BEHIND HEAVY DRAPES, HAROLD PARKER PEERED AT THEM...



THEY ALL LOOK SOMBER, WALKER. I THINK YOUR...

...THEY'RE BECAUSE THEY AREN'T ALONE WITH YOU. COME LET ME HELP YOU INTO YOUR COFFIN YOU'LL SEE...

MILLARD HELPED HIS AGED CLIENT INTO THE SATIN-LINED COFFIN. DOCTOR DODDY STOOD BY, WAITING...

NOW HERE'S THE SPEAKER YOU JUST LIE THERE AND LISTEN... LISTEN TO THE WHOLE THING.

WHAT ABOUT AGE. IF THE LID IS CLOSED...



THERE'LL BE ENOUGH AIR TO LAST AN HOUR OR SO. THAT'S ALL THE TIME YOU'LL NEED, I'M CERTAIN.

ALL RIGHT, IF YOU SAY SO.



READY?

READY.

THE LAWYER CLOSED THE LID. MR. PARKER LAY BACK AMONG THE SATIN FOLDS. THE SPEAKER AT HIS EAR RASPED...



CAN YOU HEAR ME, HAROLD?

YES.



LAWYER WALKER WHISPERED:

ALL RIGHT, I'M GOING TO OPEN THE DRAPES AND LET THEM COME IN. NOW, LISTEN...



MR. PARKER HEARD THE DRAPES SLIDE OPEN... HEARD HIS TRUSTED LAWYER'S VOICE:

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. IN HIS DYING WISH, HAROLD PARKER REQUESTED A CLOSED-COFFIN CEREMONY... SO IF YOU WILL, ALL FILE PAST THE COFFIN, WE'LL BEGIN...

LYING IN THE CASKET, HAROLD PARKER HEARD THE SOUNDS OF FOOTSTEPS SHUFFLING BY THE COFFIN... HEARD FANT WHISPERS. HE STRAINED TO LISTEN.



IN HIS MIND'S EYE, HE COULD SEE THE FACES OF HIS 'MOURNING RELATIVES' FILING BY HIS GABINET AS HE HEARD...

ONE AFTER THE OTHER THEY CAME, AND HE COULD ALMOST SEE THEM AS THEY SAID...

INSTEAD OF THAT **DEATH MUSIC**, THEY OUGHT TO BE PLAYING 'WE'RE DEAD! THAT YOU'RE DEAD! YOU BASTARD, YOU!'

THAT'S A **GOOD ONE, JOHN, AND SO TRUE!** WHEN? WHEN?

HUMPHAT! IT'S ABOUT TIME THE OLD CROW KICKED ONE.

I'LL SAY! I'VE GOT ENOUGH DEEDS TO COVER MY WHOLE INHERITANCE...

GRIFEST! I THOUGHT HE'D NEVER DIE. WHEN DO THEY READ THE WILL?

TOMORROW AT WALKER'S OFFICE. I'LL BE THERE WITH BELLS ON IT'S FLORIDA FOR ME!



HAROLD SHIFTED HIS TEETH, THE TEARS WELLING UP IN HIS EYES AS HE HEARD...

ALL MY LIFE I HAD TO PRETEND I LIKED THE OLD CROW! NOW I'LL GET WHAT I REALLY LIKED! A SHARE OF HIS FORTUNE!

MURDER! MURDER! MURDER! LOVE THAT WORD!

O-MIG! HONEY, LOOK! SAD! HE'S DEAD!

HOW CAN I? I'M DELICIOUSLY HAPPY! BOY, CAN WE USE THAT DOUGH!



ONE AFTER THE OTHER, THEY CAME BY. HAROLD COULD SEE THEM... EACH ONE...

GOOD-BYE, FARNER! HELLO, EASY LIVING! MY PRAYERS ARE ANSWERED!

THANKS FOR THE TONGUE, YOU OLD SKIN-FLINT!

THANK GOODNESS I DON'T HAVE TO SMILE AT HIS ONLY PUSSY ANYMORE. MAKING LIFE I LIKE HIM...



FINALLY, HAROLD COULD STAND IT NO LONGER. HE LEAPED FROM HIS GABINET... SCREAMING...

I'VE HEARD ENOUGH, YOU LIES. YOU GOOD-FOR-NOTHING FORE-FLUSHERS... YOU VULPURES... YOU LEECHES...

GOOD LORD! HE'S ALIVE!



THE MOURNING RELATIVES STARED IN HORROR AS OLD HAROLD FARMER STORMED UP AND DOWN...



I'M CUTTING YOU ALL OFF... EVERY BLASTED MONEY-HUNGRY ONE OF YOU, I'M CUTTING YOU OFF WITHOUT A CENT...

HERE'S THE WILL, HAROLD! AND A PEN...

I'M LEAVING MY WHOLE FORTUNE TO A WORTHWHILE CHARITY... TO THE... THE...



MR. FARMER SCANNED THE WILL WITH BLAZING EYES...



TO 'THE HAPPY HOME FOR ORPHAN CHILDREN'...

MR. FARMER SIGNED THE WILL WITH A FLOURISH...



THERE, YOU MERCHANT RATE? YOU... YOU... GASP... CHOKER...

MR. FARMER DROPPED DEAD...



IN ANOTHER ANTEROOM, DOCTOR JAMES CROTTY WAS QUIETLY PAYING OFF THE GROUP OF ACTORS HE AND LAWYER WILLARD WALKER HAD HIRED TO SPEAK INTO THE MICROPHONE CONNECTED TO THE SPEAKER IN MR. FARMER'S COFFIN...



THANKS, POLICE! JUST WHAT WE WANTED!

ANY TIME, DOC, FOR THIS KIND OF DOOR!

AND AFTER THE STUNNED RELATIVES HAD LEFT, THE DOCTOR AND THE LAWYER STOOD OVER MR. FARMER'S COFFIN WITH MR. FARMER'S 'REALLY-DEAD-THIS-TIME' CORPSE INSIDE, AND CONGRATULATED EACH OTHER...



WELL, JAMES CROTTY, PRESIDENT AND TREASURER OF 'THE HAPPY HOME FOR ORPHAN CHILDREN' - YOU DOES IT FEEL TO HAVE JUST RECEIVED A CONTRIBUTION OF TWO AND A HALF MILLION DOLLARS?

JUST FINE, WILLARD WALKER VICE PRESIDENT AND SEC-RETARY OF 'THE HAPPY HOME FOR ORPHAN CHILDREN'! JUST FINE!

PERFECT. WELL, THAT'S MY BLAME-SERVING, MOODS. BY THE WAY I TOOK A FIVE DUT TO 'THE HAPPY HOME FOR ORPHAN CHILDREN' TO OTHER NIGHT, LOVELY PLACE AND EMPTY LOT, FINE EDIFICE, TOO? A CENT, DARLING GROUP OF ORPHANS? TWO... GIRLS... AGES 25 AND 30, RESPECTIVELY? THEY'RE HELPING THE DOC AND THE LAWYER SPEND THE DOLLAR WELLS TO THEIR 'DESERVING CHARITY', ETC. NOW, REMEMBER - IF YOU'RE A FAN AND AN ADDICT OF E.G. HARRIS, JOIN THE E. G. FAN-ADDICT CLUB!

THE END